

CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ASSAM FOR DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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Abstract: Education is one of the most crucial factors of socio-economic development in India. Achievement of sustained and equitable human development is an urgent need and a challenge before the present Indian Society. It is the quality of higher education that decides the quality of human resources of the country. However, higher education in India in general and in Assam in particular has not been able to perform its optimum role in the direction of human resources development. Though there have been considerable progresses in all walks of life over the last few decades, large sections of people in North-East India, especially in Assam still live below the line of poverty and have inadequate access to education and economic resources. Present paper is an attempt to highlight the major challenges of higher education in Assam for development of human resources and endeavors to find an answer and solve the key problems.

Index terms: Higher Education, Challenges, Human Resource, Development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most powerful instruments of Human Resource Development of a country. Human Resource Development is the process of helping people to achieve their individual and social goals by realizing their potential. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), “the process of HRD includes the policies and programmes that support and sustain equitable opportunities for continuing acquisition and application of skills, knowledge and competencies which promote individual autonomy and are mutually beneficial to individuals, the community and the larger environment of which they are a part”.

Achievement of sustained and equitable human development is an urgent need as well as challenge before the present Indian Society. It is the quality of higher education that decides the quality of human resources of the country. Higher education has played an important role in the development of human resources for national development. It can produce high levels of professionals, technical and managerial personal, generate new knowledge through research and impart such knowledge leading to development of human resources. Recognizing the important role of higher education in the development of human resources, the National Policy on Education (NPE-1986) stated that, “Higher Education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. It contributes to national development through dissemination of specialized knowledge and skills. It is therefore a crucial factor for survival”.

Higher Education provides leadership by supplying well developed human resources which ultimately takes the responsibility of operating the systematic development in India. However, Higher Education in India in general, and in Assam in particular has not been able to perform its optimum role in the direction of Human Resource Development.

II. OBJECTIVES

The major objectives of the present paper are as follows–

- 1) To identify the problems of higher education in Assam for the development of human resources.
- 2) To find out suitable solutions to overcome those challenges.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on secondary data. These are collected from various books, reputed articles of research journals and also from the internet sources.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Status of Higher Education and Human Resource Development in Assam

Higher Education was a late comer in the North-East India, the then undivided Assam. The first higher education institution i.e. Cotton College, the premier institution of higher education of NE India was established in 1901. Before the establishment of the Cotton College, till the middle of the 19th Century, Assam did not enjoy any higher education facilities. But since independence, in the last 65 years, higher education institutions expended enormously. In spite of the phenomenal growth of higher education in Assam, it is very disheartening to observe that the standard of higher education is declining and which is affecting the quality of education in the state.

According to the Indian Human Development report (2011) prepared by planning commission of India, Assam is one of the more economically backward States in India and has recorded low Net State Domestic product (NSDP) and Per capita NSDP growth rates in the last decade that was below the corresponding growth rates for the country. The Human Development Index (HDI) for Assam is 0.44 against all India index of 0.586 in 2011. The literacy rate of Assam is 73.18% against all India rate of 74.04%. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher Education in Assam is 8.8% which is below the national rate of 10.8%.

B. The challenges of Higher Education in Assam

Although, Higher Education has gradually expanded in Assam since independence, issues involving access, equity and quality still continue as present challenges that need to be addressed. The main challenges are –

a) Problem of innovative outlook and research

Most of the higher educational institutions in Assam lack innovative outlook and ingredient of research. It hinders the development of teachers, students and the overall infrastructure of the institutions. Educational institutions are still following the traditional mode of teaching and learning.

b) Inadequate funds

Most of the higher educational institutions in Assam are suffering from limited funds. As a consequence, they are constricted to expend on areas like improvement in technology and research based activities.

c) Shortage of qualified teachers

Quality of teaching depends upon quality of teachers. Availability of adequate and qualified teacher is a prerequisite of quality education. Shortage of qualified teachers in the field of higher and technical educational institutions has been a constant issue of concern. Privatization and lack of adequate financial support from the government has made it difficult for many institutions to attract qualified and talented teachers.

d) Lack of proper infrastructure and modern methods of teaching

Most of the Colleges and universities lack proper infrastructure and modern methods of teaching. Teaching still takes place through the traditional lecture method which cannot help in the proper development of youth.

e) Lack of job guaranteed courses

Education is always seen as a medium to guarantee livelihood prospects in future. But, in today's competitive world where whole world is running after professional course, the educational institutions in Assam are still venturing for traditional courses. In Assam, there is a great dearth of institutions offering education in professional or vocational courses. The institutions which offer

such education also cannot guarantee any placement. Due to this, a large number of students move out to other states for higher studies.

V. PERSONALIZED SUGGESTION

Our higher education system has to be restructured and revolutionized completely. The following measures can be taken to overcome the challenges of higher education in Assam-

- A. Our higher education has to provide skill oriented vocational education to the youths so that they can fit themselves in the competitive job market.
- B. In order to improve the higher education scenario in Assam, we expect more support from UGC as well as from Government directly to those institutions suffering from limited funds.
- C. Research and technological developments are inseparable components of any university. Research projects help to generate resources, strengthen infrastructure facilities and augment the academic resources for the benefits of the students in addition to the personal recognitions to the scholar.
- D. Proper relationships between job and higher education should be established. Without establishing the relationship with job and employment, higher education cannot create interest and has cannot attract raw talents of the region. So, universities and colleges should focus on extending job oriented programmes.
- E. Entrepreneurship Development course is a must for higher education in Assam. These courses will help students get practical knowledge about the potential areas in agricultural and non agricultural areas. This will empower them with requisite information about market forces and will help them to become earning members as soon as they come out of the colleges.
- F. Youths of Assam have specially to be taught the principle of “Work culture” which is greatly decreasing amongst them. This can only be done through providing them a comprehensive system of education which caters to the physical, mental, social, emotional, spiritual, economic and all other needs of the youths. Then only we can proudly declare that our higher education system has been successfully playing its role of developing countries.

VI. CONCLUSION

Higher education in Assam is facing big challenges having them to compete with the global players especially after education became a marketable product and after India opened its market for global competitors. However, institutions of higher education in Assam, with crying needs for basic amenities and infrastructure are hardly ready for this global competition. The annual exodus of bright students from the state in search of better education partially indicates the defeat of the institutions of higher education in Assam. If the human resource in Assam is to be saved from becoming bane on economy of the state, then a well thought policy of higher education combined with adequate government funding and proper monitoring and control over standard of higher education only can bring much needed change in the area. For a prosperous state, we the responsible citizens should give such a society to our youth where they can develop their abilities without any fear and doubt. More and more research is required to find out the problems and to solve it, which is related to the higher education in Assam and Human Resource Development.

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